operate in the Minnesota country and did so. The incorporators were Joseph Renville, Thomas Jeffries, Kenneth McKenzie, Wm. Laidlaw, and perhaps Duncan Graham, and one or two others. They named the new organization the Columbia Fur Company. Its central establishment was the post on Lake Traverse. All of their posts were licensed by the U. S. Indian agent at Fort Snelling.

When, in July, 1823, Maj. Long's exploring expedition reached Lake Traverse on its way down the Red River, it found an important post of the Columbia Company in charge of Mr. Jeffries and others. (Keating's "Narrative," p. 444 et seq.) The village of the Sioux chief Wahnatah, the Charger, was near by and the expedition spent some days in the neighborhood.

By the year 1825 the Columbia Company had a number of licensed trading posts in Minnesota. These posts were called by the pretentious name of "Forts," and were as follows: Fort Adams, at Lac qui Parle; Fort Washington, at Lake Traverse; Fort Union, at Traverse des Sioux; Fort Barbour, Falls of the St. Croix; Fort Bolivar, at Leaf Lake; Fort Confederation, on the Des Moines River, where the city of Des Moines now stands.

THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY.

In 1808 John Jacob Astor founded the great business organization known as the American Fur Company. He was its President until in 1834, when he was succeeded by Ramsay Crooks, father of Col. William Crooks, for whom Crookston was named. After 1822 this company had absorbed or swallowed up its smaller rivals and was conducted in the country east of the Missouri by what were termed its Northern and Western Departments. The Northern Department embraced the region of the Great Lakes and the upper Mississippi and was conducted by Ramsay Crooks, whose headquarters were in New York, but who spent much time at Mackinaw and at other of his trading posts in the Northwest. Pierre Chouteau, Jr., of St. Louis, superintended the Western Department, comprising, at first, the Missouri River country and the Rocky Mountains. Later Chouteau & Company purchased the Western Department, including the country west of the Mississippi. In Minnesota the chief post or "factory" of the company was at Fort Snelling, and Gen. H. H. Sibley was the "chief factor" for many years.

In 1825 the American Company had a post at Red Lake called Fort Pike. Other of its posts in the Minnesota country were at the "upper sand hills," on the Cheyenne; at Crow Wing, on the Mississippi; at Little Rapids (Carver), on the Minnesota; at Leech Lake, Devil's Lake, below Big Stone Lake, Sandy Lake, and at the Forks of the Red Cedar River. It is unfortunate that the names of the traders at these posts have not been preserved.